

Female Stakeholders Group

GIRLS MATTER

Summer 09

Vol II Issue II

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Special points of interest:

- Girls Stakeholder Group will meet at IJJA on Tuesday September 15th for a lunch meeting. Hope to see you then.
- Read the poem from Shanna on the back of this newsletter. Shanna has been in the juvenile justice system.



Dealing With Girls' Anger

No one will argue: While working with girls can be a very rewarding experience, there are times when the work is exasperating. Numerous challenges face the girl-serving professional every day. Among these challenges, girls' anger is increasingly identified as one of the most difficult.

Indeed many adolescent and pre-adolescent girls are angry. But it is not an anger without just cause. When one considers the daily reality of many girls' lives, girls' anger becomes a predictable, if not comfortable response. A lifetime of oppressive poverty, abuse, academic failure, familial dis-

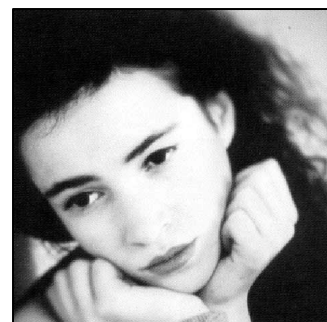


ruption, gender-bias, racism, heterosexism, harassment, and uncountable unmet needs can build a powder keg. Some girls explode—behaving destructively towards others through assault, vandalism, and other crimes. Other girls implode—harming themselves through self-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse, self-mutilation, unprotected sexual risk taking, and suicide.

As adults, we are often uncomfortable with girls' anger. It may frighten us or trigger our own anger. We may attempt to deny or diminish a girl's anger ("Oh, it can't be all that bad. You'll get over it!"), shame her ("What are you crying about? You think you've got it bad? Look at all we've done for you!"), or punish her (isolation, physical or verbal abuse, removal of privileges). None of these efforts move us towards understanding a girl's anger; in fact, we may further oppress her by ignoring her anger as a signal that some-

thing is wrong.

Through much collaboration, the Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force created a new



context for girls' anger, one in which girls' anger is allowed, affirmed, and embraced as a tool for girls' empowerment rather than as a tool for destruction. Central to this context is the necessity of connecting girls to their communities in an effort to create social change.

Continued on page 2

JJ Programs for Girls — A National Overview



Often programs tend to miss the "at risk" years for girls. A comprehensive survey of 112 individual youth-oriented programs (for both delinquent and non-delinquent youth) showed less than 8% provided services to girls between the ages of nine and 15, the crucial determining years of adolescence and the years when self-esteem plummets. Rather,

services and programs tended to serve girls younger than the age of nine and those between 14 and 21 years of age. Moreover, the few programs available for girls often tend to address single issues, such as teen pregnancy and mothering, although occasionally other programs like substance abuse or gang behavior are included. This pattern is largely a result

of issue-specific funding initiatives, but it means that girls' often interconnected and overlapping problems get ignored. Similarly, programs tend to be more reactive rather than preventive, concentrating more on girls who are at risk of getting into trouble.

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Dealing with Girls' Anger continued...

Not intended as a replacement to the individual and relationship work necessary to address girls' anger, the community connection adds a further dimension to healing by addressing the cultural context that often supports the abuse, bias, racism, and other triggers of girls' anger. By connecting with their communities, girls can learn to act on their feelings constructively as well as

the goal rather than the management or suppression of girls' angry feelings.

Adults—regardless of their relationship in girls' lives—can model behaviors that reflect anger as a tool of empowerment rather than destruction. Adults are encouraged to share their frustrations with girls, clearly describing their feelings and the situation that led to the anger—without blaming others for their anger. Women are encouraged to admit that they do get angry, bucking cultural pressure that women remain passive lest they be negatively labeled for expressing angry feelings. Men are encouraged to eliminate their discomfort about angry females and to avoid trying to protect angry females from themselves. All adults should avoid cursing at girls

when angry as well as hold other adults accountable for their roles in girls' anger. In addition, adults can recognize the contributions of women's anger as catalysts for social change in the United States and internationally and teach girls about these women.



— The Girl Connection, March/April 2000



plant the seeds of social change. Ultimately, girls empowerment becomes

A Girl's Peace of Mind



Most people agree, girls are raised to take on traditionally feminine roles. But what happens to girls' peace of mind when they experience this grooming in a culture that routinely mocks, marginalizes and devalues the feminine? Millions of girls see and understand that boys are given preferential treatment and standing in society well

How can girls be at peace with themselves when they get the message that women are less important than men?

before it is time to make career choices. Ask girls who have better locker rooms and equipment to use at school. Ask girls who are the adult decision-makers in their places of worship or in the government. The messages they get about who comes first and who comes second are pervasive. How can girls be at peace with themselves when they clearly get the

message that girls and women are inherently less important than men? What can we do? We can begin by understanding that peace does not mean passivity. Although it is often equated with the absence of conflict, striving for peace entails struggle.

More tips in the Winter Issue of this newsletter.

— The Girl Connection, April 2003



Girls and Juvenile Justice

— According to the Office of Juvenile Justice, most of the young women who come in contact with the juvenile justice system first do so with a status offense (e.g. runaway, truancy, liquor law violations, curfew violations).

— One review of the literature has indicated that nearly half of incarcerated young women meet the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

— Arrest trends differ widely by sex and by race/ethnicity; they differ also depending on the offense for which young people are arrested.

— Young women's participation in gangs has grown more rapidly in smaller cities than in large urban areas. It is estimated that 10% of gang members are young women.

"True Peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice."

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Being Gender Responsive and What Works



Being Gender Responsive means creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of the lives of women and girls and that addresses and responds to their strengths and challenges.

Clearly, the “what works?” scholarship does not accurately reflect what is known about women in the criminal justice system nor what is needed in order to create gender-responsive programs for this population. Thus we suggest a shift in the question from What Works? To What is the Work?

Our response to What is the Work? Is:

Prevention

- Create a community response to the issues that impact women’s lives and increase their risk for criminal justice involvement. In

order to prevent women from entering the system, community-based substance abuse treatment, economic support, and a community response to violence against women should be provided.

Do No Harm

- For women who have criminal justice involvement, create alternatives to secure custody. Modify standard policies and procedures (restraint, body searches, isolation) that often retraumatize survivors of prior abuse. Develop a culture/environment within correctional settings with deems abuse by staff to be unacceptable and culpable.

Create Gender-Responsive Services

- For women who are in the system, provide services (both in context, i.e. culture/environment, and con-

tent) that are comprehensive and relate to the reality of women’s lives. Programs should take into consideration the larger social issues of poverty, race, and gender inequalities, as well as individual factors that impact women in the criminal justice system. Services should also be responsive to the cultural backgrounds of women.

Build Community Support

- Develop a system of support within our communities that provides assistance to women (housing, employment, transportation, family reunification, childcare, drug and alcohol treatment, peer support, and aftercare) who are returning to their communities.

— Covington, S. and Bloom, B.
“Gender-Responsive Programming and Evaluation for Females in the Criminal Justice System: A Shift from *What Works ?* to *What is the Work?*”



Social Action

Encouraging young people to take social action may seem like a scary proposition. But, the reality is that teenagers are at a stage in life when one of their primary developmental tasks is to rebel and find their own identity. They are going to do it one way or the other. Social action is an opportunity to teach them to do it in ways that can limit negative consequences and develop skills they can use in other areas of their lives. Through social action young

women can learn the skills of working with others toward a common goal, of winning and losing gracefully, being organized, persistent, assertive and taking appropriate risks. They can also gain perspective. Young women in the juvenile justice system frequently develop skewed personal beliefs due to their devel-

opment being interrupted by any number of things. They may believe they are incapable of making a positive impact or that problems are insurmountable. Social action is a chance for them to look at the big picture. It can put life into perspective.

Social Action is a way for young women to put their life in perspective.

JJ Programs for Girls continued...



A good snapshot of where we are nationally on girls’ issues and programming can be seen from a brief overview of the activities of 23 states that successfully applied for challenge grant funds from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency



Prevention. This review indicates that most states are in the very early stages of understanding the needs of girls in their systems. As a result, of the states with available information (21), virtually all (95%) used some of these funds to merely gather data on the characteristics and needs of the girls in their systems. Programs must be continuously scrutinized to guarantee that they are serving as genuine alternatives to girls’ incarceration rather than simply func-

tioning to extend to social control of girls. The tendency of programs to become more “security” oriented in response to girls’ propensity to run away must also be resisted. Indeed, a component of successful programming for girls is advocacy and ongoing monitoring of the closed institutions.

— R Shelden, Women, Girls & Criminal Justice, Dec/Jan 2009



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Female Stakeholders Group

**Who would ever think
that so much went on
in the soul of a young
girl?**

— Anne Frank

*To have a voice is to be human. To
have something to say is to be a
person. But speaking depends on
listening and being heard; it is an
intensely relational act.*

— Gilligan, 1993. p.XVI

Training and Conferences



2nd Annual Covington Curriculum

Conference
Gender-Responsive + Trauma-
Informed
Services For Women

St. Paul, MN

September 22 - September 24,
2009

IJJA 22nd Annual Conference

Shilo Inn
780 Lindsay Blvd

Idaho Falls, ID

September 13th—16th, 2009

www.ijja.net

13th Annual National Workshop on Adult & Juvenile Female Offenders

Harmony Beyond Boundaries

Jackson, MS

October 9—14, 2009

www.ajfo.org

Girl Matters Training of Trainers

Jacksonville, FL

November 2—November 6, 2009

www.justiceforallgirls.org

Through Her Eyes Conference

Springfield, MA

October 8, 2009

A Perfect Love

By Shanna

A perfect love is what every woman
dreams about.

A perfect love will be there when push
comes to shove, and a perfect love will
be right by your side, no matter what.

They will cry with you.

A perfect love wouldn't leave you all
alone.

A perfect love will stay right there until
you are dead and gone.

A perfect love will also be your husband.
A perfect love sometimes just erases it
away.

A perfect love from the heart.

A perfect love should never split apart.

A perfect love is something that should
always be there and you should always
care about one another's well-being!